

**Makoto Kimata**  
1938 – 2016



Makoto Kimata ist ein bekannter japanischer Musikproduzent, der viele europäische und amerikanische Jazzmusiker in Japan bekannt gemacht hat. Er hat viele Jahre mit Ria und Wim Wigt von TIMELESS Records zusammengearbeitet. Durch die Vermittlung von Ria Wigt hat er Eugen Cicero 1982 in **Amsterdam** kennengelernt. Er hat über sein japanisches Label KEYSTONE alle Timeless Aufnahmen auf den japanischen Markt gebracht und kurz vor Eugens Tod die **LULLABIES** produziert, welche in Deutschland aufgenommen wurden. Im Februar 2006 schickte mir Kimata folgende Email:

Makoto Kimata is a well-known Japanese music producer who made many European and American jazz musicians known in Japan. He has worked with **Ria and Wim Wigt** from TIMELESS Records for many years. Through the mediation of Ria Wigt, he met Eugen Cicero in Amsterdam in **1982**. All Timeless recordings were licensed to the Japanese market through his label KEYSTONE and shortly before Eugen's death he produced LULLABIES, which were recorded in Germany. In **February 2006** Kimata sent me the following email:

I have already made a lot of jazz projects with Kenny Drew, Benny Golson, Chet Baker, Freddie Hubbard, Tommy Flanagan, Hank Jones and so on. So, I guess, Eugen knew my name and we agreed to make some albums together. He was always on the list of my favorite pianists and I loved his recording of "Rokoko Jazz".

I remember that Wim Wigt, who is a president of Wim Wigt Production and Timeless Records, first introduced me to Eugen. After I met him in **Amsterdam** in 1982, we discussed that I would like to make his albums popular in Japan. I have produced 5 albums with Eugen:

- SPRING SONG	November 1983
- JAZZ BACH,	March 1985
- ROKOKO JAZZ,	June 1987
- ROMANTIC CINE JAZZ	December 1992
- LULLABIES,	May 1995

After recording "Spring Song", I discussed with a certain promoter to set up his Japan tour. The promoter promised to do so, if album sales are good. The sales were very good. In these days, I worked for RCA Victor as a manager of production department, and with my staff I tried very hard to make Eugen much more popular in Japan. I had a lot of friends at the newspaper, magazine and radio stations, so they helped me and introduced "Spring Song" to Japanese music fans. And Eugen's popularity grew.

This is a big story that Eugen was able to make his own tour in Japan. Also, I can't forget that Swing Journal Magazine, which is the biggest jazz magazine in the world, promoted him. In **1987** we had 10 concerts in Japan and almost all concerts were successful. The concert halls had a capacity of 500 or 600 seats. Later, Eugen came back to Japan again 3 or 4 times.

In 1982, I produced an album titled "Lullaby" with the trio of **Kenny Drew** with **Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen** and Ed Thigpen. This album was a big hit in Japan. But the album didn't have all standard songs, except only one tune which was "Wiegenlied" by **Johannes Brahms**. So, I had the idea of making an album with Eugen of all classical lullabies. He liked my idea. Unfortunately, he could not come to Japan, so it was recorded at a German Radio Studio in June **1995**. I put "**Lullabies**" on the Japanese market under my label MELDAC JAZZ.

The last time I met him in Zurich was in May 1995. I have very enjoyable memories with him. He invited me to his house and took me to very a beautiful restaurant near Zurich Lake. Or, I took his family to very nice Japanese restaurants in Tokyo or Amsterdam.

**2014** hat Makoto Kimata ein Buch geschrieben, in dem er über seine Begegnungen mit den Großen des Jazz erzählt. Hierin enthalten ist auch ein Kapitel über Eugen Cicero, das uns **Mitsuru Okayama** in einer englischen Version zur Verfügung gestellt hat. Aufgrund der verschiedenen Alphabete der japanischen Sprache und des völlig anderen Sprachgefühls ist eine Übersetzung sehr schwer, doch um zu zeigen, mit welcher Wertschätzung Eugen in Jan begegnet wurde, sind wir das Wagnis einer Übersetzung eingegangen. (Hinweis: Makoto Kimata verwechselt Deutschland mit Österreich *Austria*)

**2014** Makoto Kimata wrote a book in which he talks about his encounters with the greats of jazz. This also includes a chapter on Eugen Cicero, which Mitsuru Okayama has made available to us in an English version. Due to the different alphabets of the Japanese language and the completely different feeling for language, a translation is very difficult, but in order to show the appreciation with which Eugen was met in Japan, we undertook a translation nevertheless. (Note: Makoto Kimata confuses Germany with Austria Austria)

Title	ジャズは気楽な旋律 <b>Jazz is an easy-going melody</b>
Sub-title	プロデューサーが出会った素顔の巨人たち <b>The producer who met the giants face to face</b>
Author	Makoto Kimata, 1938 -2016
Published	2014

The chapter Even Bach and Chopin would start dancing

### **Eugen Cicero – a master of improvisation**

So far, we have talked about the masterpieces left behind by jazz musicians. Some of them have made a name for themselves not only as composers, but also as master arrangers. **Duke Ellington** is one such musician. There is one pianist and arranger that I also cannot forget. His name is Eugen Cicero, and he transforms classical melodies into brilliant jazz.

The use of classical melodies as material for jazz has been around for a long time. I remember that big band arrangers, especially in the golden days of the ballroom, often tried to do this. Among them, Tchaikovsky's "**The Nutcracker**," performed by **Les Brown's Orchestra**, was greatly enjoyed and was also popular as dance music. Eugen Cicero was a pianist who was passionate about swinging melodies of various composers, **from Bach to Mendelssohn** and Debussy, in the field of modern jazz.

His mother was a classical musician, and he was a child prodigy who gave a recital at the age of 10 under her guidance. How did he come to be interested in jazz?

Looking back at that time, he describes his feelings as follows. "My brother listened to a lot of jazz music, and naturally my ears were filled with various jazz melodies. In this environment, I gradually became attracted to the improvisational nature of jazz, which is not present in classical music. In classical music, you can't deviate from the score, but in jazz, every melody is just a trigger, and from that trigger, you can freely create your own melody as you like. With this in mind, I started with my favorite melodies, such as Bach, Chopin, Mozart, etc. and tried to develop them into melodies of my own design.

In the beginning, it didn't seem to work out so well. Then I started to progress step by step through trial and error. One day, about a year later, I played my mother the "**Prelude No. 2**" from **Bach's Book of the Well-Tempered-Clavier**. At first, I don't think her face was very supportive. But after listening to it, she said, "Values and standards change with time. You can't criticize Bach for changing to the Bach you play. If you think it's right, then go ahead and do it. These words from my mother made me feel much more confident. I was happy."

But the public did not always understand his music: "I think he blasphemes the great composers. His music is evil." He received a lot of criticism from conservative classical fans, he said.

Still, he believed that people would understand him one day and he pushed forward on his own path, undaunted by the criticism. The album "**Rokoko Jazz**", released in 1965, was the beginning of public recognition.

Jazz fans praised his arranging skills and were intoxicated by his solid technique as a jazz pianist and his exciting swinging improvisations. At the same time, many classical fans with a flexible mindset appreciated the freshness of Bach and Chopin that he brought to the table.

"This album's reputation convinced me that I was on the right track. I can't forget the feeling that I had finally been rewarded. I was so happy." Looking back on that time, Eugen told me, "I was so happy".

One day, I asked him what he used as a basis for selecting classical melodies. He said, "**Baroque music**, as represented by Bach, has many pieces that are relatively easy to swing. However, there was a French pianist, Jacques Loussier, who was working exclusively with Bach at the time. It would not be all that interesting to do the same thing as he. This is why I sought material not only from Bach but also from Mendelssohn, **Chopin**, and a wide range of other classical composers. However, there was one thing I had learned:

No matter how popular an author's works are, there are some that do not inspire me to work on them. Such wonderful melodies, but why...?"

"Can you tell me more about that?"

"I realized that there were two important points in my selection criteria. One is whether the melody swings and the other is whether I can build an emotional melody line. It may sound abstract and hard to understand, but I think it's easier to say whether or not I enjoy the arrangement. If you can't enjoy yourself, there's no way you'll be able to entertain others."

"In the 1960s, you released several titles including Rokoko Jazz, but if you had to pick a favorite piece, what would it be?"

"That's hard to say... If you were to ask me what arrangement I like best, I would say Mendelssohn's **Spring Song** and Bach's "Prelude No. 2". Those two songs are included on the album "Spring Song" (RCA Bay State label). I got a chance to make a fresh start after getting to know Mr. Kimata, and I was able to go to Japan many times, so I am very grateful to you."

**Eugen** was born in Romania in 1940, and in 1962, after becoming a jazz pianist, he moved to Austria, and then to Switzerland, where he remained until the end of his life.

Due to the socio-political situation in Eastern Europe at that time, it seems that he was very lucky to have been able to move to Austria and Switzerland, and I once asked him about this. I was particularly interested in Romania, which at the time was very much a dictatorship.

"The move to Austria was not so difficult for artists from various fields. At that time, Romania was a poor country, and Austria was much richer than Romania. Although the country was ideologically closer to the East, it was also closer to the West, and going to Austria was like going to work from poor Romania. Politically, there were many inconveniences, but when it came to art, all the countries shared a common consciousness and understanding, and there was no common dignity, neither in the West nor in the East." His words reminded me that the countries of Europe differed in ideology. But they all had a deep sense of nostalgia when it came to art and culture. With his remarkable sensitivity, he made his fame become globally known with his innovative arrangements of the music of Bach, Chopin, Mozart, and Mendelssohn.

His last recording for me was "Lullabies" (Meldac Jazz), which he made in 1995. At that time, he gave me a bottle of low-alcohol wine as a gift, and I still remember how good it tasted. He said: "This is a very expensive wine that a very rich friend of mine made especially for me. But because I don't like alcohol, I would like to give this bottle to you, Mr. Kimata, who also has a weakness for alcohol. There are only ten bottles of this wine in the world, including this one."

He said, "Mr. Kimata you gave me a chance to revive and to reawaken my piano." I can say that this is the best thing that could have happened to me as a producer. Eugen passed away peacefully in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1997.